

Abstract 463

TITLE: HIV Prevention Social Marketing Outreach to HighRisk Populations

AUTHORS: Rasmussen, HA; Johnson, D; Hertz, D (California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS)

ISSUE: Despite the recent drop in AIDS deaths, the incidence of HIV infections among high risk populations targeted by California's AIDS prevention campaign has not declined. The California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS, is continually faced with the challenge of finding new and innovative ways to guarantee delivery of safer sex messages, increase calls to the California AIDS hotline, encourage those most at risk to get tested for HIV and assist community-based organizations (CBOs) in their HIV prevention efforts.

SETTING: The program described below takes place throughout California, targeting those most at risk for contracting HIV, including young gay men; men who have sex with men and their female partners, with an emphasis on African Americans and Latinos; and injection drug users and their sexual partners. Statewide AIDS prevention organizations play a critical role in the program serving as a direct link to these groups. Intervention occurs at locations popular among these high risk groups, including nightclubs and bars, street hangouts, cruising areas and sex clubs.

PROJECT: In response to the ongoing need to create effective ways to deliver HIV prevention messages to high-risk audiences, the California Office of AIDS developed and implemented the first-ever long-distance calling card campaign aimed at reducing the spread of HIV. Fifty thousand calling cards were produced with an attention-grabbing design face, which reads "Respect Yourself. Protect Yourself." The toll-free California AIDS hotline number was also printed on the back of each card. These cards guaranteed long distance. AIDS prevention organizations throughout the state applied for the cards and distributed them locally at locations popular among high-risk groups. The calling cards were also used as incentives for those most at risk to attend prevention programs at HIV counseling and testing sites and encourage them to get tested and return for their results.

RESULTS: 106,099 calls were made using the 50,000 calling cards, which guarantees the AIDS prevention message was heard this number of times more than two hits for each card. All 50,000 cards were distributed and an overwhelmingly favorable response from CBOs has created a demand for a second, expanded calling card program to include Spanish language cards. Also, prevention programs in other states are using California's program as a model to implement similar programs locally.

LESSONS LEARNED: California's HIV prevention calling card program demonstrated that a marketing strategy often used in the private sector to promote products and services can be successfully applied to the public sector as an effective social marketing tool. The program also proved the effectiveness of providing those most at risk with something of additional value, such as long-distance calling time, along with a prevention message.

PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Harold Rasmussen, Chief
HIV Education and Prevention Services

Address: California Office of AIDS
P.O. Box 942732
Sacramento, CA 94234-7320

Telephone: (916) 323-4314

Fax: (916) 323-4642